ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A merchant or other person ("merchant") wishing to place online classified advertisements ("ads"), can create, schedule for insertion and otherwise manage ads via HTTP communications between a browser program and a website ("Merchant Site"). The various features are made available on the browser in the form of pages containing static HTML-tagged structures and content, as well as dynamic content via embedded Javascript and Java applet components. The pages are requested from and sent to the browser by the Merchant Site server over the Internet.

A shopper or other person ("shopper") wishing to view ads online uses a browser-based series of HTTP communications with a website ("Shopper Site) to request and receive over the Internet currently running classified ads created and placed as described above. The Shopper Site server responds to requests by the shopper to perform various functions that are necessary to or that enhance the online viewing of ads and their use as an aid to shopping offline and/or online.

In addition to the Merchant and Shopper Sites, there is a database server ("DB Server") that accesses a centralized database that stores information relating to merchants, ads, shoppers, sessions and the persistent states of information and various features available through the Merchant Site and the Shopper Site, respectively. A series of database manager components running on a website server ("DB Home Site") manages access to the database run by the DB Server.

Communications between the Merchant Site server and the DB Home Site server, and between the Shopper Site server and the DB Home Site server, are managed by resident data transfer components and processes that employ HTTP and FTP transfer protocols over a local area

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network if the servers are physically connected or over the Internet if they are not physically connected.